



House System Launches “Open Housing” Pilot

The University of Chicago House System will offer a gender-neutral housing option, allowing students increased choice in selecting roommates, regardless of gender, in order to respect and support the various needs of our students. This option will be offered as a pilot program to second-, third- and fourth-year College students, starting in January 2009. First-year students are not eligible to live in gender-neutral housing.

It is important that we create an environment that is welcoming, inclusive and supportive of our students. Making gender-neutral housing an option for students who do not find traditional same-sex room assignments ideal or appropriate connects directly to the University’s diversity mission.

In May 2007, the Inter-House Council—the student-governing body for the College House System—passed a resolution which states that to “better reflect the ideals of equality, fairness and inclusiveness that are an integral part of University policy,” a gender-neutral housing option should be implemented. This is part of a growing national trend among colleges and universities and has been implemented at such institutions as Dartmouth, University of Pennsylvania, Stanford, and Washington University in St. Louis.

In response, a committee consisting of College students and staff was formed to consider the resolution. The committee consulted with students, staff and faculty in developing a recommendation to implement a gender-neutral housing option, to be called “Open Housing”. Kimberly Goff-Crews, Vice President and Dean of Students, consulted broadly with campus groups in her review of the recommendation, before approving it this autumn.

Open Housing will be a choice available in all Houses, except those traditionally designated as single-gender. Students will not be assigned to Open Housing unless they have elected to do so. We believe strongly in respecting student ideas and responding to student needs, and we trust that students are thoughtful and responsible when making important decisions, including decisions about housing. Students will not be required to reveal their reasons for opting to live in Open Housing.

Open Housing will launch as a pilot program this January, with full implementation expected in the fall of 2009. As with all University policies, this policy will be reviewed, and refined as necessary. A formal review of the policy will be conducted in the fall of 2010.

Additional information about Open Housing is available at <http://housing.uchicago.edu/>. Specific questions can be sent to the Office of Undergraduate Student Housing staff at: housesystem@uchicago.edu.